Archeologia e Paesaggi Culturali

Casi studio del Mediterraneo antico

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Archeologia e Paesaggi Culturali.
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Indice

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Archaeological Landscapes in South-Eastern Sicily:

The case studies of San Lorenzo and Calicantone

Defining Landscape(s)[1]

Landscape (ger. Landschaft, fr. paysage, it. Paesaggio, pol. Krajobraz) is a complex concept in itself, filled with a stratification of meanings and interpretations. In everyday language, it denotes a "large area of a countryside especially in relation to its appearance", or "the characteristic features of an area of activity" (e.g. political landscape) (Cambridge Dictionary, Oxford Dictionary), but starting from the phenomenological significance (what can be seen), specialized meanings of the same word have arisen in scientific language.

In the XIX century, the geography of Landscape (Landschaftskunde) was the description of the physical features of a region (i.e., what was visible), whereas S. Passarge[2], conceived it as synthesis between human and natural geography[3]. The term was later used in the field of ecology, history, archaeology and architecture, but with different nuances depending on whether emphasis was set on the natural environment or on the human impact. Therefore, Natural Landscape or simply Landscape (natural environment) became the counterpart to Cultural Landscape, or landscape (human impact) [4]. The importance of the human element was stressed by the European Landscape Convention signed in Florence in 2000, defining landscape as "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors". According to the ELC, objective (geology, fauna, flora, and resources) and subjective elements (perception) are intertwined such that a landscape cannot exist independently from people who perceive it, which is not the case for habitats.

Since the 90's, this concept has been adapted to different physical and psychological contexts, with the coining of derivatives such as seascapes[5], islescape[6],

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[1] F. Buscemi is responsible for paragraph 1 and 2 (San Lorenzo); M. Figuera for paragraph 3 (Calicantone).
[2] Passarge 1915.
[3] Hallair 2011.
[4] Gosden, Head 1994; Arnaud 2008, 21.
[5] Gosden, Pavlides 1994; Briggs, White 2009.
[6] Peil 1999.

islandscapes[7], powerscape, and expressions such as landscapes of memory[8] or landscapes of power.

In the field of archaeology, the "Landscape approach" developed in the 60's, on the heels of the ecological approach of G. Clarke and the dawn of New Archaeology, into scientific methods of reconstructing past environments and natural resources as backgrounds for human activities [9], creating an almost independent branch of archaeology with its own methods and tools, especially after the introduction of various innovations from remote sensing to georeferencing and GIS. But even in this case, the positivistic approach of the 60's and 70's was biased, with the emergence of post-processual archaeology, by an interest in human perception: landscapes became constructed landscape, conceptualized landscape, and ideational landscapes [10].

A good summary of the current situation is presented by Civantos (2007, 13), who identifies three elements shaping different dimensions of the landscape and consequently archaeological research: 1) the physical environment; 2) the social environment; 3) the symbolic, or perceived space. To this, we can add a fourth dimension involving the notion of archaeological landscape concerning archaeological evidence as one of the main constituents of contemporary landscape, which we labeled Landscape of archaeology [11]. While pertaining to Cultural Heritage and representing a principal concern for architects dealing with landscape planning, the archaeology of Landscape and the Landscape of archaeology can prove to be powerful tools for the understanding of both past and present cultures, and for the communication of the past. From this point of view, Landscape provides a bridge between the past and the present, as was highlighted in a workshop held in 2018 in Crete and Sicily [12].

Starting from these premises, we would like to present two case studies from south-eastern Sicily where the landscape approach has been applied, more from the symbolic perspective of the perception of landscape than the reconstruction of past environments.

San Lorenzo Vecchio: from periphery to center

The first case is represented by the San Lorenzo Vecchio complex near Pachino (Fig. 1). Today a private property, this typical Early Modern Sicilian

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[7] Broodbank 2000.
[8] E.g. Schama 1995; Maus 2015.
[9] For a review: Cambi, Terrenato 1994; Barker, Mattingly 2000.
[10] Ashmore, Knapp 1999.
[11] Militello 2007; 2012.
[12] Militello, Panagiotopoulos 2021.

farmhouse (Masseria) consists of four parts encircling a large courtyard **(**Fig. 2**)**. It goes back to the end of the XVI Century and is located along the road connecting Noto with Pachino, in a rural landscape, only 1 km from the sea, and in the nearby of the natural reserve of Vendicari, which was an important harbour site in the Byzantine and Early Medieval period[13].

What we see today includes, however, remains of ancient ruins belonging to the Greek and Early Medieval periods, already recognized by Paolo Orsi[14] and Luigi Agnello[15], and recently revisited for the medieval phases, by Giglio[16] and Margani[17], and for both phases by Buscemi[18].

The oldest nucleus of the complex consists of a building with ashlar walls set along regular rows that are still visible in the northern wall of the farmhouse, clearly belonging to the Greek period [19] (Fig. 3). Thanks also to further remains within the farm, an elongated building can be reconstructed, divided in two sections, which was probably a temple dating between the V and the IV Century B.C. It is perhaps to identify with a temple of Apollo, mentioned in the ancient sources. The Carthaginians halted their march against Syracuse not far from this temple in 406 B.C. because of a plague which hit the army, which the Syracusans attributed to the intervention of Apollo. The building was still existing in the Roman period, if the interpretation is accepted of our building with the *statio Apollinis* quoted in the *Itinerarium per maritima loca* of the *Itinerarium Antonini* (IV century A.D.)[20].

Later, in the VII-VIII century A.D. the temple was embedded in a Christian complex consisting of a rectangular building (a monastery) in the area of the temple, and a *Trichora* church to the west, linked together by a rectangular room (Room A) . This church could have been a *Martyrium*, i.e. a church built over the tomb of a saint, since the Sicilian topographer Tommaso Fazello, in the XVI century A.D., described a crypt, today not visible. Electromagnetic surveys made by the PAN of Breslaw in 2015 identified a cavity just beneath the church. Not only the plan, but also the building technique, using ashlar masonry also in the vault, and decorative details, suggest a date to the VII-VIII century A.D. Even if we are not aware about the life continuity of the *Monasterium* of S. Lorenzo, the church continued to be used probably also through the Islamic period until the Modern Era (1790)[21].

[13] ARCIFA 2000.
[14] ORSI 1942.
[15] AGNELLO 1948.
[16] GIGLIO 2003, 117-118; 175-179.
[17] MARGANI 2005A, 52-54; MARGANI 2005B.
[18] BUSCEMI 2012; 2016.
[19] BUSCEMI 2012.
[20] BUSCEMI 2012.
[21] BUSCEMI 2016, 67.

The landscape data is crucial for the monumental complex during all this *longue durée*: temple, church, monastery and farmstead appear as a typical examples of how the same spot can be linked to the surrounding territory in a different way, creating different landascapes, and telling three different stories.

In this perspective, particularly prominent is the relationship between the building and the ancient viability. The complex is settled on the Eastern edge of a swampy plain, along the prosecution towards the South of the Greek *Via Elorina*[22], jointing Syracuse with Helorus, that survived until the Svevian period (XIII cent. A.D.) as *magna via di Respensa* and today overlayed by the modern road SP 19. In fact, the Classical and Late Classical period, the function of the temple, set at the border of the territory of Syracuse, was that of a frontier sanctuary, defining and symbolically protecting the limits of the territory of Syracuse against the Camarina area. The building, well visible at a distance in the plain, should have been perceived as a passage between two different realms.

After a long *hiatus* in our knowledge about the temple, a physical change of the landscape in the surroundings, with the cover-up of important port of Vendicari, just on the North, determined a crisis of the Byzantine settlement, a dropdown movement of commercial traffic towards the South, and a functional and strategic change of the site of S. Lorenzo, where a *trichora* very similar to the previous one in Vendicari was built together with a monastery. Its central role in the christianization of South-Western Sicily was supported by the already mentioned road axis. In fact, as in the North African context, the San Lorenzo complex exploited a variety of activities, including administration, hospitality (*xenodochium*), charity and so on, in a similar way to other buildings in South Eastern Sicily (S. Pancrati at Ispica, S. Pietro de Tremilio or ad Baias at Siracusa, chiesa di ctr. Pirrone at Licodia Eubea), possibly in connection with the arise of a rural village devoted to the agricultural exploitation in favour of the monastery.

The church of San Lorenzo is still mentioned in the XVI century by Fazello, and at the end of the XVIII century in the inventory of damaged buildings by the earthquake of 1693.

With the construction of the XVI century farmhouse San Lorenzo becomes one of the centre of administration of a large estate still belonging to the late feudal system of Sicily.

Calicantone: a ritual landscape

The site of Calicantone is located in the Hyblaean Area, on the western edge

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[22] Arcifa 2001.

of one of its characteristic gorges, called Cava d'Ispica, N/W-S/E between the modern towns of Modica and Ispica (province of Ragusa).

Calicantone is an EBA site belonging to the Castelluccio culture (2200-1450 BC). It was excavated in recent years (2012-2015) by the University of Catania and the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage of Ragusa. The investigations focused on the already know Early Bronze Age[23] necropolis, which was later reused in the Medieval Period. It extends over a 100x200 m area along the calcareous rock face of the gorge, characterized by several ledges, and consists of 93 rock-cut chamber tombs (Fig. 5)[24].

On the top of the hill there is the area covered by the corresponding village, already identified in the '70es, but unfortunately destroyed by modern building activities[25].

Between the village and the necropolis, a freestanding Bronze Age hut has been excavated[26]. It was possible to distinguish two architectonic phases of the building[27], which in its final period had an elongated shape (12.5×4.5 m) with apsidal endings (Fig. 6).

Even if the Calicantone settlement is comparable with other BA Sicilian settlements[28], some peculiar aspects render it unique, such as certain architectural features and the funerary function of the hut[29]. It was either deliberately destroyed by human action or levelled in an earthquake[30], sealed the furniture under a layer of earth and stones and provoking several deaths[31], as evidenced by tell-tale signs in the skeletons[32]. On the contrary, one skeleton of a baby at the center of the hut differed from the others, laying supine in a relatively tidy arrangement.

The evidence points clearly to the performance of a communal ritual associated with the preparation of the body for burial, theory further supported by the near shallow basin made of coarse lime plaster material, suggesting that it contained a liquid other than water[33].

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[23] The C14 analysis (led by Prof. Marek Krąpiec, Lab. of Geology and on Human Bones Geophysics of Cracow) indicated a chronological range between 2148 and 1744 BC (4098–3694 cal. BP 2σ).
[24] Picone 1975; 2006; Rizzone, Sammito 1999, 37–56; 2002, 137–144; 2010, 49–64.
[25] Picone 1975; Rizzone, Sammito 1999; Militello et al. 2018b, 260.
[26] Militello, Sammito 2014; 2015; 2016; Militello 2015; Militello et al. 2018a; 2018b.
[27] Militello et al. 2018b, 269–271.
[28] For the Sicilian comparisons see Militello et al. 2018b, 277–280.
[29] Militello et al. 2018b, 274–280, 287.
[30] This event is dated to the final phase of the EBA 1570±70 Cal. BC (3852–3547 cal. BP 2σ), according to C14 analysis conducted on human bone samples taken from the hut, confirming the pottery chronology.
[31] At least 11 skeletons were unearthed inside: Militello et al. 2018b, 294–296.
[32] Militello et al. 2018b, 296.
[33] Militello et al. 2018b, 265, fig. 13, 285–286; 294.

These new discoveries provide a more complete picture of the EBA settlement, providing an insight in a "funerary landscape" and a deeper understanding of how the physical characteristics of the landscape would have shaped the relationship between the realm of the living and that of the dead[34].

In this research a key role has been played by digital tools in archaeological surveying and digging activities, and in understanding and communicating. Digital research activities were carefully planned in order to manage several complexities, including various archaeological evidence, each with their own documentation requirements[35].

The geomorphology of Calicantone is particularly relevant for the study of the settlement dynamics and its funerary practices. An analysis of the ritual landscape has been attempted, identifying a space divided into two different areas (Fig. 7).

The first one consists of the necropolis, where the data analysed in the GIS platform confirmed certain features of the spatial distribution of the tombs, such as the fact that they form at least 14 clusters (of between 2 and 11 tombs)[36], probably correspond with different social groups based on parental or clan relationships[37]. A study and mapping of the clusters derived from specific research is forthcoming[38], for now, it is possible to underline that in some cases a single cluster of tombs occupied a single ledge, while in other cases several clusters resided on the same ledge (Fig. 8). Some courtyards are wider, suggesting that they were used by groups of people, in any case no more than 8, and there is often an inverse relationship between elaborate façades and the very narrow courtyard areas in front of them used, as opposed, by individuals.

Even if internal paths and steps carved into the rock connect the groups of tombs, the general impression is that interconnection was not the principal aim of the necropolis layer. Due to the lack of archaeological evidence regarding how these courtyards were used, we cannot specify whether they were reserved for ritual activities, probably associated with commemorating the dead, or simply for practical aspects of burial.

The second ritual area relates to the hut, which laid directly between the village and the necropolis and held a crucial role in funerary activities. The traditional survey highlighted the absence of any natural or artificial elements separating the necropolis from the settlement and the digital analyses revealed that the village and

[34] Buscemi, Figuera 2019.
[35] Buscemi, Figuera 2019.
[36] Already highlighted by Occhipinti 2013.
[37] Buscemi, Figuera 2019, 478–480.
[38] Żebrowska 2021.

the necropolis were not visible to each other, while the hut formed a clear reference point within the settlement system, as it was visible from both the village and from parts of the necropolis. Therefore, the area where the hut was built might have been perceived as a border or demarcation zone between life and death[39].

In order to make the results of our research understandable to the wider public, a virtual reconstruction of the landscape was developed by the research group of the University of Catania and the CNR-ISPC of Catania[40], which includes a rendering of the hut positioned in the georeferenced 3D model of the site (Fig. 9). The animation of the virtual reconstruction shows a supposed route between life and death, from the hut to the tombs. The ritual itinerary begins in the hut, where funerary activities such as the preparation of the body for the burial were performed. Then, the procession continues to the unbuilt space separating the hut from the main necropolis area, where all the funeral participants would have once gathered. From there, a route leads to the necropolis through still existent paths and steps carved into the rock. We believe that only a few of those involved in the earlier ritual activities completed the entire journey into the necropolis, in fact, as already mentioned, the courtyards in front of the tombs would have hosted no more than 8 people. So, the actual burial was not attended by the whole community, whose presence would have been limited to the rituals performed in, or around, the hut.

Therefore, our reconstruction of this ancient funerary landscape proposes the identification of a possible path linking the world of the living (the settlement) with the world of the dead (the necropolis), through an intermediate area (the hut).

[39] Buscemi, Figuera 2019, 477–478.
[40] Buscemi, Figuera 2019, 480–481.

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Abstract

Archaeological Landscapes in South-Eastern Sicily:
The case studies of San Lorenzo and Calicantone

As a multi-layered concept, landscape archaeology can refer to different approaches, now aiming at reconstructing past environment, now to reconstruct its symbolic meaning and its perception. In our paper we will focus on the last aspect through two case studies situated in the South-eastern Sicily: the stratified complex of San Lorenzo Vecchio near Pachino, and the Bronze Age site of Calicantone, Modica. The first will be used as a paradigm of how the role of the same area within the landscape can change along the centuries, the second as a way to reconstruct a funerary landscape of the past.
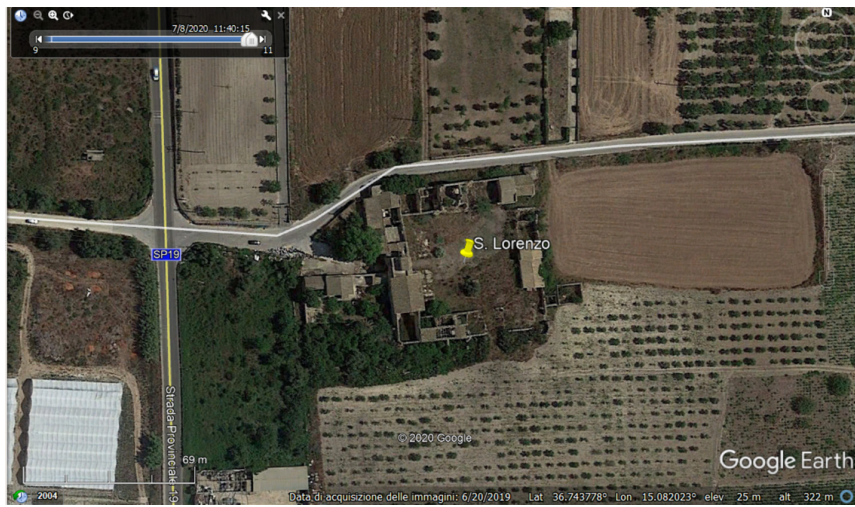
MARIANNA FIGUERA, FRANCESCA BUSCEMI

Fig. 1. San Lorenzo Vecchio – Positioning on GE.

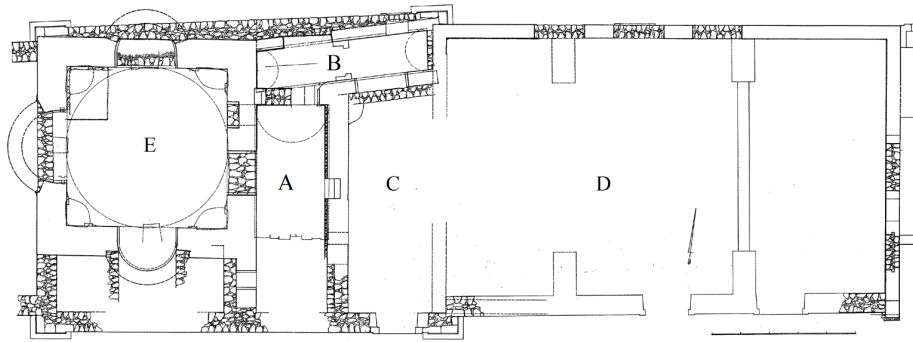Fig. 2. San Lorenzo Vecchio – Modern Farmstead (survey G. D'Agostino).

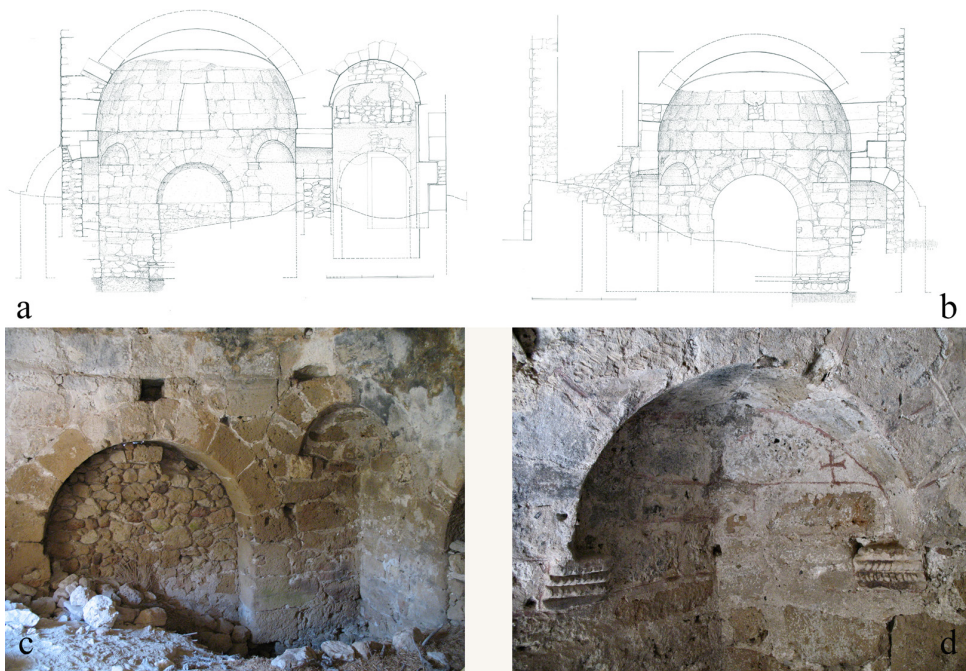Fig. 3. San Lorenzeo Vecchio, the temple (D).

Fig. 4. San Lorenzo Vecchio, the trichora (E): a) sections EW; b) section NS; c) masonry and arches of the NW corner; d) detail of a

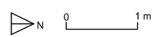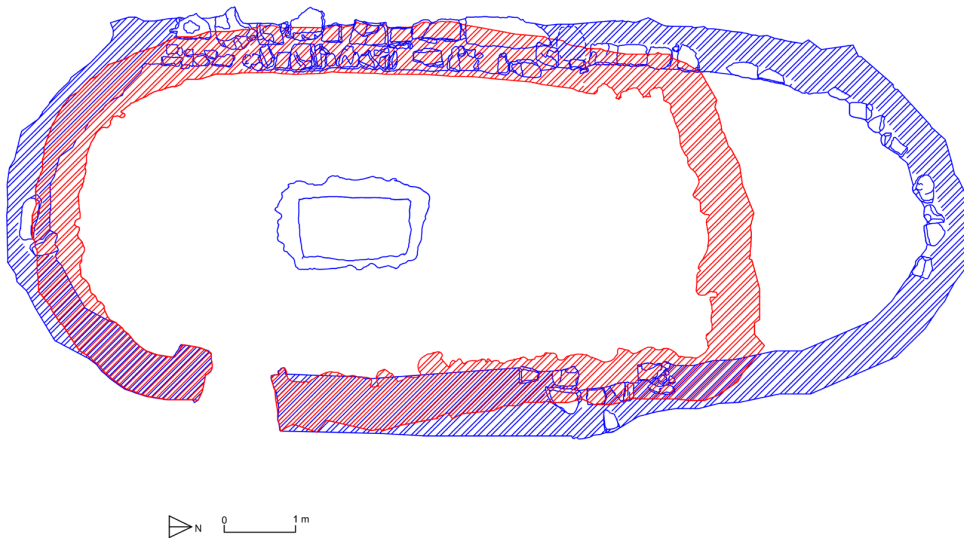Fig. 5. Calicantone. The rock-cut chamber tombs of the necropolis.

Fig. 6. Calicantone. The two phases hut (plan by M. Figuera, T. Messina,
K. Żebrowska).

Fig. 7. Calicantone. Distribution of the archaeological evidence in the ritual landscape (elaboration by F. Buscemi, M. Figuera).

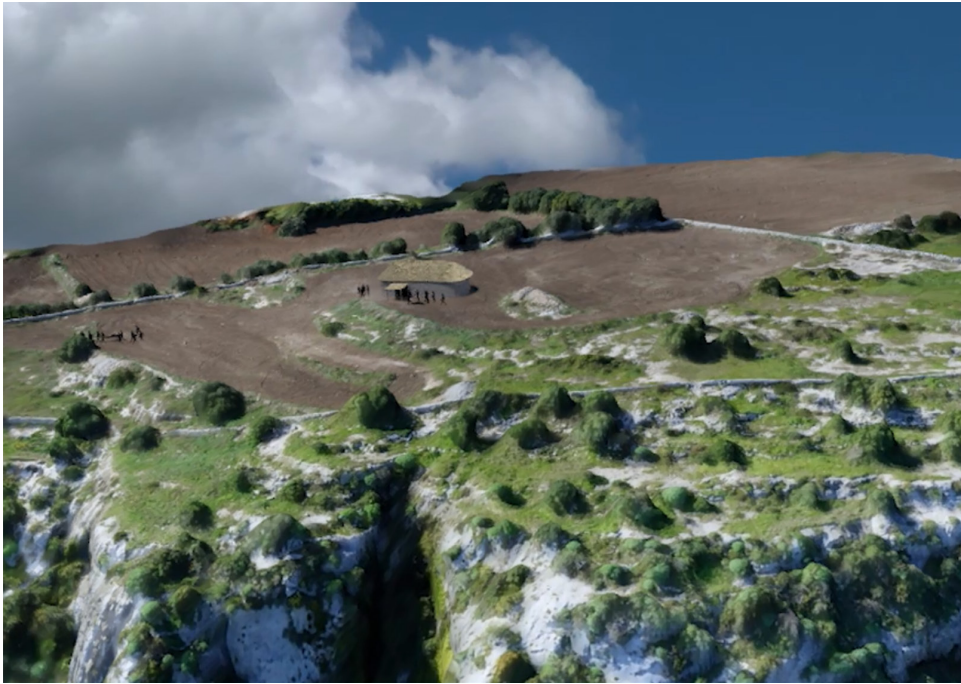Fig. 8. Calicantone. Cluster of tombs 71–73.

Fig. 9. Calicantone. Virtual 3D scenario with the Blender rendering of the hut
(3D virtual model by M. Di Vincenzo).

Il corso di laurea magistrale in Archeologia, dell'Università di Catania, è attivo dal 2009 tramite una serie di convenzioni per il doppio titolo, firmate dall'Università di Catania l'Università di Varsavia (Polonia) e le Università di Selcuk-Konya ed Ege-Smirne (Turchia).
Accanto alla ordinaria attività didattica il corso ha organizzato in questi anni, una serie di iniziative come mostre, convegni e seminari di respiro internazionale.
I Quaderni del corso internazionalizzato in Archeologia, dal titolo significativo di Syndesmoi, (in greco antico i legamenti del corpo), vogliono rappresentare il risvolto scientifico di questa attività, ospitando quei contributi alla ricerca che scaturiscono dalla collaborazione con istituzioni straniere.
Il volume 8 è una raccolta miscellanea che riunisce dieci contributi dedicati allo studio archeologico del Paesaggio Culturale inteso come espressione di fenomeni di appropriazione, reinterpretazione e trasmissione di conoscenze, pratiche e sistemi identitari. L'angolo di osservazione di tali fenomeni è rappresentato dall'ampio contesto del Mediterraneo antico in una prospettiva diacronica che va dalla preistoria al medioevo.
Gli autori, nell'affrontare il tema dei paesaggi culturali, offrono al lettore spunti metodologici diversificati – che vanno dallo studio iconografico e testuale, all'integrazione con le discipline scientifiche, superando la prospettiva topografica –, modelli interpretativi teorici e casi studio dal Vicino Oriente all'Egeo alla Penisola italiana.

The International Course in Archaeology of the University of Catania has been active sin-ce 2009, thanks to a series of conventions for double degrees in Archaeology, signed by the Universities of Warsaw (Poland), Selcuk-Konya and Ege-Smirne (Turkey). Since 2009, above and beyond its didactic commitments, the Course has given impetus to a variety of initiatives including international exhibitions, conferences and seminars. The Quaderni, with their meaningful title of Syndesmoi (ligaments of human body, in an-cient Greek), represent the scientific aspect of this activity, housing the results of research activities born from the collaboration among the participating universities.
Volume 8 is a collection of ten contributions devoted to the archaeological study of the Cultural Landscape as an expression of phenomena of appropriation, reinterpretation and transmission of knowledge, practices and identity systems. The point of view of these phenomena is represented by the broad context of the ancient Mediterranean in a diachronic perspective ranging from prehistory to the Middle Ages.
The authors, in tackling the theme of cultural landscapes, offer the reader diversified methodological cues - going beyond the topographical perspective, ranging from iconographic and textual studies to integration with scientific disciplines -, theoretical interpretative models and case studies from the Near East to the Aegean to the Italian Peninsula.

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